

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Masters Degree in Management from the NOVA – School of Business and Economics

**„Development of the Digital Marketing Strategy
Based on Global Best Practices“**

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ABSTRACT

This report is about a business project titled “Development of the digital marketing strategy based on global best practices” and entails a social media strategy for the National Dairy Council (NDC) of Ireland. It has the objective to communicate their message in promoting the Irish dairy industry and the vital role that dairy products play in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, across different social media platforms. The approach was defined by summarizing main findings in the form of a literature review, as well as conducting a benchmark analysis across 14 dairy and non-dairy organizations and brands worldwide.

Keywords: Social Media, Marketing, Dairy industry

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1. BRIEF CONTEXT

a. Client

The National Dairy Council of Ireland (NDC) plays a vital role in driving a sustainable dairy industry in Ireland and in educating consumers on the role of dairy in their lifestyles. It was established by the Minister of Agriculture in 1964 as a semi-state body and changed to an industry-financed organization in 1973. The NDC is working on:

- Leveraging science and research in the key areas of strategic focus to drive category growth and development
- Building compelling nutrition platforms for dairy to support healthy living across the life stages
- Increasing dairy consumption among Irish consumers through engaging and insight led marketing strategies
- Safeguarding the heritage and reputation of Irish Dairy among consumers

b. Market overview

The dairy industry in Ireland is very much focused on exports. About 90% of the total production is exported to around 140 countries of the EU and abroad (FDII, 2016), making it the 10th largest exporter of dairy worldwide (askaboutireland, 2016). About 10% of the Irish dairy production caters to the “fresh drinking milk market” (askaboutireland, 2016), the per capita consumption of which is the third highest in the world, standing at 130 liters per person (Icos, 2016).

Since 1983, the Irish dairy industry has had a quota system imposed by the EU, which means that volumes were fixed and a minimum price for milk was set. This meant that prices were stable and the number of milk suppliers saw a drop from 65,000 in 1983 to around 18,000 today (Icos, 2016). In 2015, these milk quotas disappeared. As the European dairy market is

saturated, the additional production will be aimed at the growing markets Africa and Southeast Asia (Icos, 2016).

c. Current client situation

The National Dairy Council is launching a new 2016 – 2020 strategy. Their vision is a future in which Irish dairy is recognized and trusted as a vital part of people's diet and general health across all life stages, and indispensable to Ireland's social and economic wellbeing. The focus of this new strategy is to champion, across different audiences, the role of quality pasture-based dairy and its nutrition benefits in supporting healthier, more active living. The strategic priorities are based on four pillars: Leveraging science and research to drive category growth and development, building compelling nutrition platforms for dairy to support healthy living across all life stages, increasing dairy consumption among Irish consumers through engaging, insight led marketing strategies and safeguarding the heritage and reputation of Irish dairy among consumers. In order to obtain these goals, the organization wants to leverage Social Media to reach a wider audience and target their message to people that are most likely to be interested in the food category they are promoting. Based on the goals stated above, the business objectives for the use of Social Media were formulated and summarized in the table below:

Business Objectives	
1	Increase consumption of dairy products by doing category marketing
2	Increase Awareness of nutritional benefits of dairy products for a healthy lifestyle
3	Increase reputation of Irish dairy products among consumers
4	Build strategic B2B relationships to leverage science and research in dairy category

d. The Business Project challenge

The NDC has a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. However, although they are actively creating content, success is not being achieved. As a result of launching their new 2016 – 2020 strategy, they want to find new ways to utilize these channels more effectively and to improve their appearance.

The aim of this business project with the National Dairy Council is to better inform the organization about digital media and to help them better understand the competitive digital landscape of the dairy industry both in Ireland and the rest of the world. Thus, the challenge lies particularly in content development, i.e. creating informative and engaging digital campaigns.

As compared to brand marketing, where the focus is often on brand sentiment through engaging, emotive marketing communications, the NDC, as a category voice, focuses on predominantly informative and/or educational content. This states a unique challenge in terms of digital marketing for the CEMS Business Project.

In detail, the task is to investigate content marketing output and resources through examining the digital marketing activities of similar organizations all over the world, with a view to learning from best practice. As a consequence, the group is asked to assess the digital content strategy of the NDC in order to suggest ways in which social media might be incorporated more effectively. Parallel to this, it needs to be assessed whether the NDC is focused on the areas of their strategic challenge to then give high level recommendations, based on the research findings.

Looking at the challenge beyond the lens of digital marketing and social media, I believe that the real business challenge is to increase the category consumption and the question is whether social media is the right channel to achieve this. However, this is not the task of the

business project but a stimulus to think further about the root cause of the problem the NDC is facing.

2. REFLECTION ON THE WORK DONE AND INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION

a. Problem definition

Since launching their social media channels, the NDC has been having only limited knowledge, resources and know-how to use these channels in the right way, aligned with their mission and vision.

With the launch of the 2016-2020 strategy, which embraces a vision to get Irish dairy recognized and trusted as a vital part of people's diets and general health across all life stages, the NDC would like to create engaging digital campaigns to fulfill the obligation to retain and grow consumer trust in the category.

In the current stage, the digital platforms of the NDC are active but lack of sufficient consumer interaction. For example, there are 46,250¹ likes on Facebook but few likes or comments per post. The aim of the group was to find ways to build and enhance relevance by bringing consumers the importance of Irish dairy in their lives, encouraging consumers to explore and contributing to their members' brands through Social media.

b. Methodology

i. Hypothesis

As the nature of our work was purely aimed at delivering a business project in a consultative design, we were not asked to formulate any Hypotheses. However, if I were to formulate Hypotheses in the form of basic assumptions we had in this project which make our findings valid, they would be the following:

¹ May 9th 2016

H1: There is a positive correlation between category awareness and category consumption of dairy.

H2: There is a positive correlation between investing in social media and return on investment

H3: Potential consumers of dairy products are present in social media

H4: The promotion of dairy products on social media has an influence on potential consumers

ii. Methodology

The Business Project report was structured in three parts. The first part allowed us to highlight the business context of the project by giving an overview of the National Dairy Council's missions, its current social media performance and what could be done as digital strategic improvements. In the second part, a brief literature review helped us to pinpoint the relevant strategies surrounding social media campaigns. The third part explained the methodology on how we conducted our benchmark analysis, after which the results and recommendations on social media best practices for the NDC were presented.

For the first part of the report, we utilized three main sources. Firstly, we had a closer look at the presentation of the NDC on campus, which was an introduction to the business project. Secondly, we contacted our corporate advisor on this matter, in order to get a clear idea of the organization. Thirdly, we used resources on the internet such as the NDC's website.

The second part of the report was articulated around three main pillars. First, we introduced some general concepts about digital marketing campaigns and digital trends to follow in the coming years. Then, saw what the main elements and tools used in performing digital strategies were. Finally, we illustrated the review using insightful case studies about successful cross-channel social media campaigns. Due to the nature of Social Media being a fairly new form of media and one which is constantly changing, academic resources aimed at

present and future trends were limited. After consulting our academic and corporate advisors on this matter, they ensured us that we could use any credible resources we could find on the internet, in order to get the most recent findings and reports on social media. Thus, we combined articles from three streams: First, well-known platforms like Instagram, Hubspot or the Marketing Magazine. Second, articles from more renowned resources like the Harvard Business Review. Third, shorter articles from entrepreneur.com, blogs and other websites.

For the third part of the report, we conducted a practical analysis targeting social media strategies' best practices. The goal was to highlight what was already being done online and what was working for brands on different social media platforms. Thus, we structured this part into two components:

- A benchmark analysis of digital best practices of 14 different brands (dairy and non-dairy) worldwide (Ireland, USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand). This allowed us to measure the engagement of the fan base among 4 different social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube) on a 2-week basis from January to mid-April 2016.
- We contacted the community manager teams of each one of these brands to get some relevant information about their social media budget, if they require in-house social media management or if they are reaching out to an agency and finally, what their best practices to manage their social media platforms would be.

In further detail, for the benchmark analysis, we gathered social media data of the 14 brands across four social media channels. For this, we created an Excel sheet for each channel and added columns like “number of likes (page)”, “number of likes (posts)” or “frequency of posts”. An example of such a file can be found in Appendix 1. After gathering all the data needed for the benchmark analysis, all posts were labeled with the closest category, e.g. “Video” or “Informative post”. The purpose of this was to perform a social media audit in

order to then draw trends from our analysis and to show which type of posts were more popular in which genre (category voice vs. brand) and in which social media channel. A more detailed description of our approach can be found in “e. Individual contribution”.

As the NDC Ireland clearly stated that their main interest was to gain insights from best practices in social media through our benchmark analysis and not to receive specific recommendations, we kept our recommendations short and simple and depicted them more like a set of possible suggestions which they could implement, should they find them useful.

iii. Analysis

The analytical part of our review is split into two areas. First, after reading many articles online, the literature review provides a concise overview of Emerging Online Social Trends, Digital Marketing Strategies, and examples of three case studies. Second, our benchmark analysis led us to conduct a social media audit, in order to draw conclusions useful to the NDC and provide a set of possible recommendations.

A. Findings of the literature review: Digital Marketing Campaigns using Social Media

I. Digital Marketing Campaign & Emerging Online Social Trends

1. Branding in the Age of Social Media

Professor Douglas Holt (2016) emphasizes the importance of targeting “crowdcultures”. As an example, he mentions that the brands *Dove* and *Axe* championed gender ideologies around which crowdcultures were formed, e.g. Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty”. According to the author, these brands succeeded in social media as they made use of cultural branding, which works differently compared to the traditional branded-content model. Applying the findings to our client, NDC, we found the following relevant for the NDC:

- Doing research to identify ideologies relevant to the category of the brand and thus getting a grip of the “crowdcultures”, in order to practice cultural branding and stand out in social media. For the NDC, these ideologies could be formed around topics related to the “Milk Awards” or Irish farmers’ best practices and praising the quality of Irish milk.

2. 2016 Social Media Trends

R. Morin (2016) states that in 2016, companies will better integrate influence marketing concepts and content into their strategies. The importance of the role of the “influencer”, i.e. a third party who influences a consumer’s purchasing decision, is increasing. Content shared by these journalists, celebrities or industry analysts receives 16 times more engagement than paid advertisements or content posted by the brand. Thus, the author claims that organizations will have to build long-lasting relationships with these influencers, in order to meet the audience’s growing need of content (“content-snacking”). In terms of content marketing, Morin (2016) predicts a rise in professional blogger platform, a rise in visual and real-time user-generated content and the use of new channels like podcasts or webinars. Below are the results of applying these findings for the NDC:

- In order to integrate influencer marketing, initiate contacts with advocates who strategically use and spread online content. Furthermore, pay attention to user-generated content and put an emphasis on user engagement, to personalize content which will stand out and to meet the needs of the target audiences.

II. Digital Marketing Strategies

1. Social Media Strategies

First, one needs to select the right social media platform by identifying a target demographic and discovering where users spend the most time online. Then, it is important to know the DO’s and DON’T’s on social media, which we compiled based on Mark Siebert’s (2016) 5-step plan: set precise goals, conduct a social media audit, refine and update social media

platforms accordingly, refine a social media “voice and tone” and build a comprehensive editorial calendar. Some useful metrics to be used include the reach of followers, Twitter sentiment, tracking the average engagement rate or the visitor frequency rate.

Based on these findings, what is relevant to the case of the NDC is:

- First, evaluate your social media performance through the lens of your overall business goal. Second, to use the right social media platforms, start identifying your audience demographic. Third, create insightful content that generates engagement from both the audience and the team in charge of the account. Finally, through relevant metrics, you will be able to increase both your customer acquisition and brand awareness.

2. Social Media Insights for a Successful Media Mix

- For **Facebook**, the major findings were that the best time to post is between 10PM and 00PM (local time of audience), the best day to post is Sunday, posts with questions and images get the most engagement and that posts with hashtags get less interaction than those without.
- For **Instagram**, the most interesting findings were that photos using hashtags tend to get more likes than those that do not, influencer marketing increases the number of Instagram followers and that engagement can be maximized by identifying customers who are already on Instagram.
- For **Twitter**, the main outcomes were that engagement for brands was higher on weekends, tweets with images get double the engagement than those without, shorter posts between 120 and 130 get more engagement and that tweets with one or two hashtags have a 21% higher engagement rate while those with more than two hashtags show a 17% drop in engagement rate.

III. Case Studies: Successful Cross-Channel Strategies

- Mercedes-Benz USA: Ahead of the launch of their new GLA compact SUV, the brand found a way to boost awareness among young buyers through Facebook and Instagram. By asking “What would you pack in your GLA?”, introducing the hashtag #GLAPacked and using Facebook ads, they received a 54% increase in website visits from these social media channels and a 580% increase in visits if Facebook and Instagram ads were combined with Facebook direct response ads.
- Cadbury: The brand uses Twitter as their main platform, where their strategy consists of light-hearted content relevant to their brand image, with comedy playing an important role. They created their own hashtags like #FreeTheJoy and also involve trending hashtags of current holidays or events. On Facebook, the brand is very responsive to comments and often replies in a quirky way, while always staying polite. In their “FreeTheJoy” campaign, they combined a real-time marketing session with the BRIT music awards in the UK. As a result of the campaign, @CadburyUK was the third most retweeted brand and #FreeTheJoy was the third most used hashtag on the night of the awards
- Dublin Zoo: The occasion of three Asian elephant calves being born in Dublin Zoo in 2014 offered a great opportunity to drive visitors to the Zoo. Thus, they launched an “Elephant Treasure Hunt” in Dublin in partnership with the City Council. The campaign was targeted towards families and the prize to be won was a “Child goes Free to Dublin Zoo pass”. The hunt was announced on Twitter, and during the event participants were asked to post photos using the hashtag #DublinElephants. The campaign was very successful and won them several Social Media Awards.

After looking closer at these three case studies, we extracted the following points being relevant to the NDC. The driver of a good social media strategy depends on several factors: For long-term success (6 months) creating value for brands, these factors are creativity, utility

of the service, worthwhile cause and experiential elements, leading to emotions and focusing on customer acquisition. For short-term success, the most important features are related to causes, events and user-generated content, combined with the use of gamification through competitions for a prize or an offer.

B. Findings of the benchmark analysis

The practical part of the business project report with the NDC was a quantitative social media benchmark with the purpose of closely monitoring social media postings, putting these into categories and then drawing trends to conclude which categories perform better with which brand in a specific context. The findings (“trends”) described below are derived from a Social Audit Table, an example of which can be found in Appendix 2, which was created for each of the 14 brands that were analyzed, and from tables highlighting the high and low performing posts, as shown in Appendix 3, on both Facebook and Twitter for each of the organizations.

A. Category Voice – Dairy

The most effective social media channels were Facebook and Twitter and thus, these were analyzed closely. Instagram was not used by many of the organizations, whereas they had a presence on YouTube, which was characterized by infrequent postings and low engagement. On **Facebook**, the average frequency of postings is 1 per day. The most prominent purpose is to drive traffic to their websites or to inform about industry trends. The highest performing category is “Informative”, with a link to either their website (“internal”) or an article on another website (“external”). Other observations of what works well in this context includes having the right balance of text and visual content or link or starting with a rhetorical question, i.e. not asking the audience a question which demanded action from their side. The worst performing categories were “Recipes” and any content “not related to dairy”. The content shared on **Twitter** is almost the same as in Facebook, with either the same or a higher frequency in posts. As in Facebook, the highest performing category on Twitter is

“Informative” as well. Further observations of the most popular posts include that these mostly have a photo, along with an “external” link. Furthermore, posts not related to dairy tend to be not less successful, as do posts without any links to follow and posts that include job vacancies.

B. Other Category Voices

For this second set of brands consisting of organizations like Bord Bia (Ireland) or NZ Beef and Lamb, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were the channels used most frequently. As for the first set of brands, YouTube is also an ineffective channel. On Facebook, the average frequency of postings is 1 per day, mostly with the aim to drive traffic to their websites, increase category consumption, to drive category awareness and to engage their audiences. The most successful posts were in the categories “Recipes” and “Photos” (of dishes). Further observations include that an ideal post had a nice looking photo of a dish, along with an “internal” link to its recipe. However, the worst performing posts were also in the category of “Photos”, mostly due to bad quality of the photograph, event-related content or competitions asking for active postings by their fan base. Moreover, content unrelated to the respective category did not do well either. As in the first set of brands, the content posted on Twitter is almost the same as on Facebook, but with a much higher frequency of at least one tweet per day. Generally, posts that include a photo are more successful. The content which was less successful was mostly in the category “Informative” (mostly a link without a photo). Furthermore, “internal” links only work well if a photo is included and if the link is not just to a general section on the website. Unlike the first two channels, the Instagram activity of these brands is not necessarily related to the content of its Facebook posts. Naturally, the emphasis of posts should be on aesthetically beautiful photos. Some of the brands analyzed do not post regularly, while others post every 1 or 2 days. The best performing category here are “Photos” of nice looking dishes (e.g. with “Recipe”) and “Event-related” posts. The posts not

performing well are in the category “Informative” and “Photos” that are of bad quality or are too simple. Furthermore, for the announcements of competitions or winners, Instagram does not seem to be the right channel.

C. Dairy Brands

The third set of brands which was analyzed consists of different dairy brands like Alpro (Ireland) or Dairy Queen (USA). For these, Facebook is the most frequently used channel regarding social media. Compared to the previous categories, however, the frequency was less than one post per day, whereas posts on Twitter were more frequent (1-2 per day). As in the cases before, content shared on YouTube is very infrequent; however it is used to promote brand campaigns. The main purposes of posting on Facebook are to create brand awareness, to promote campaigns, to display products and to engage their followers. The best performing categories were “Photo” (of a product), “Video” and “Recipe”. As compared to the previous brands, posts can be more aspirational here, followers are more ready to engage if there is a giveaway involved and Facebook is a good platform to promote products. The posts performing less well were across many categories like “Photo”, “Video”, “Humor” and “Informative”. Practically speaking, asking trivial questions is not very popular among audiences. These brands’ Twitter posts are mostly related to the Facebook activity, along with some retweets of external posts. The most successful category is “Photo” (of products). Low performing posts on Twitter were such with “Video” content, which does not work as well as on Facebook. Also, tweets without an additional photo are not that successful as well. Unlike with the other two sets of brands, the Instagram activity of the dairy brands analyzed is very similar to their Facebook and Twitter activity. Adding to the importance of aesthetically nice looking photos of a dish or their product, adding color or an artistic component can also work well, like in the case of Dairy Queen. Furthermore, videos perform quite well on Instagram.

c. Recommendations to the company

As mentioned previously, the NDC emphasized that the aim of the Business project was not to provide specific recommendations, but rather to develop an extensive benchmark analysis. Thus, we developed a simple set of suggestions for the NDC, which will be described below.

Until now, the aim of NDC's presence in social media has mainly been to inform and educate consumers on the dairy category. Content was developed by first establishing a problem and then providing a general solution which includes how a specific dairy product can help to solve the problem.

Based the findings of both our literature review and the benchmark analysis, we recommended a social media strategy focusing on incorporating their core message in a more engaging and relevant way. Different channels should serve different objectives and target different segments with different content. Thus, a strategy for creating organic content, based on the NDC's three main pillars, category marketing, health education and B2B relationships, was created. It is illustrated through a table which can be found in Appendix 4. Besides organic content, also paid ads on Facebook and Instagram should be considered, in order to grow the key metrics "followership" and "engagement rate". For this, we created a table with a proposed strategy to create Facebook ads, which can be seen in Appendix 5.

d. Concerns (shortcomings, implementation problems expected)

As mentioned in "d. Business Project Challenge", if one looks beyond the digital marketing project to the actual root of the problem which the NDC is facing, the real business challenge is to increase the category consumption of dairy. As it seems like a necessity to be present on all major social media channels, it was never questioned by the NDC if social media is the right channel to achieve their goals.

A major learning of this project was for us the vast difference of promoting a corporate brand on social media vs. promoting a category, and it seems fairly difficult for dairy. Adding to this, the recent trend of veganism and consuming dairy substitutes was not taken into account in our study. However, it can be argued that this makes it much more difficult for the category to be promoted.

As part of this study, we also contacted the community managers of the various brands analyzed but only got two replies, which did not add any value to our analysis in our eyes. Being provided with numbers as to what budget they allocate to their social media activities would have been useful for our analysis, as we could not provide any estimate on the costs involved, which could cause problems for the implementation on the NDC's side.

e. Individual contribution

Our report was divided into three parts, the first being about the business context, the second consisting of a literature review and the third part representing the practical analysis. We allocated the task as such that my area of responsibility was the latter part. At the beginning of the business project, every group member chose three organizations (category voice – dairy, category voice – other industry and dairy brand) of their allocated country (Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) and analyzed their social media activity on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube on an Excel sheet. As a result, we had sufficient data of content posted on social media of 14 different brands in the time frame from the beginning of January until mid-April. An example of such an Excel file can be found in Appendix 1.

I was in charge of gathering data for three organizations in the United States. I chose the National Dairy Council of the United States as a category voice for dairy, “Fruits & Veggies – more matters” as a category voice representing another industry, and “Dairy Queen” as a dairy brand. While looking for suitable organizations, I primarily utilized the internet and

looked for brands based in the United States. For confirmation, I asked our corporate advisor Ms. Spillane, who then gave me the green signal.

After every group member had gathered their data, our plan was to turn this data into specific and tailored recommendations. Ms. Spillane recommended us to “label” all the postings on social media that we had analyzed into categories we believed made sense, e.g. “Video”, “Photo” or “Informative Link”, to then be able to extract major trends of which of these categories performed better or worse and in which social media channel, nature of organization/company or context. My first task was to think about a suitable way to structure, combine or separate the data in a useful way. While looking at all the data gathered from the group members, I started thinking about the most suitable tags for their posts. For this, I had to look at every post again in order to label it. Then, I wrote down how often each category or “label” was used, in which social media channel, and if these posts were performing well or not. Then, I created a table for each the high and the low performing posts on Facebook and Twitter for every brand. An example can be seen in Appendix 3. These contained the “top categories” and the type of postings that worked best or worst, and notes of anything I thought worked especially well or not well. Besides that column, I added the most or least successful example of a post. After having created these tables for every one of the 14 brands, I started to think about the best way to recombine these in a useful way to include in our report. Thus, I decided to structure my findings in terms of organization type, i.e. “category voice – dairy”, “category voice – other industry” and “dairy brand”. Under each heading, I summarized the tables created before. Thus, one could see a pattern in terms of organization type.

The next step was to develop a “Social Media Audit” table, following a template by Keith A. Quesenberry (2015) for every brand. This showed which labels their posts had on every channel, which labels were the most successful, the frequency of posting content and the

purpose of it (e.g. “drive to website”, “drive category consumption”). A sample of a social media audit table can be found in Appendix 2.

After having created these various tables displaying major trends of what worked well in social media and what did not, across all 14 brands, the next task was to think about recommendations for the NDC. As our corporate advisor explicitly asked us not to focus too much on this part, we tried to keep it short and simple. Thus, I looked at NDC’s three main objectives regarding Digital Media - category marketing, health education and B2B relationships - and stated the most appropriate category of content (“label”) for each one of these, along with recommendations for content and which channel to use, based on the benchmark analysis above (see Appendix 4). With the help of a colleague, I looked into Facebook ads and created an example of how the NDC could create these strategically (see Appendix 5).

I believe that my individual contribution to this project was very important as I evaluated all the data gathered for our quantitative analysis and organized it in a presentable way in order to provide our findings and then come up with a set of recommendations.

3. ACADEMIC DISCUSSION

a. Possible links with the field of Management

Nowadays, most companies are present on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or LinkedIn and consumers have been engaging with brands online for more than a decade. In order to measure the impact social media activities have on the business, it is crucial to use accounting methods, which represents a new management challenge (Morris, 2011).

b. Relevant theories and empirical studies

It seems like a must to be on social media for any organization nowadays, but little information is put in justifying the costs involved. Thus, one needs to ask the question if there is a financial return involved and if yes how high that ROI (“return on investment”) is. This section will present and discuss some of the most relevant theories that exist in this field so far.

A number of papers have been published on the topic of whether ROI can be measured on social media activities and the opinions of authors include a range of views. Fisher (2009) states that the “inability to measure ROI was named by marketers as one of the most significant barriers to the adoption of social media tactics by their organization”. In fact, according to a study conducted by Awareness (2012), only 12% of organizations could track the effectiveness of their investment in social media against financial revenues (Awareness, 2012).

Hoffman and Fodor (2010) answer the question of whether it is possible to measure the ROI of social media marketing with: “Yes you can. But it requires a new set of measurements that begins with tracking the customers’ investments – not yours” (Hoffman et al, 2010). According to their findings, managers ought to measure consumer motivation to use social media and the investments from their side while engaging with brands online, rather than starting a calculation based on how much they are investing. Such consumer investment measures can be the number of visits and time spent with the application as well as the number of Facebook updates and Twitter pages about the brand. These metrics serve the purpose of measuring changes in awareness levels of word-of-mouth increases. According to them, trying to quantify social media has a narrow focus, which is very short-term, while developing relationships with customers is a long-term endeavor, and does not take into account qualitative measures such as the value of a tweet for a brand. The authors argue that

although the measurement of ROI of social media efforts is important, making sure that social media efforts are effective is far more important. Conventional metrics in marketing focusing on ROI lead to campaigns on social media which aim at short-term gains without taking into account consumer motivations. Resulting out of this are campaigns which “expect the customer to work for the brand”, whereas in effective strategies, the brand is working for the customers, who will spread and create content.

Contrary to Hoffman et al’s (2010) view of the possibility to measure the ROI of social media only in a certain way, other authors suggest that it can only be measured in financial terms. For instance, Blanchard (2009) argues that ROI is, after all, a business metric and that the measurement of social media requires an appropriate way to translate the non-tangible results of social media into meaningful data. Others claim that social media ROI can be readily measured, such as Bughin and Chui (2010). They argue that, according to the results of a McKinsey survey, the use of the internet, including social media, improves a company’s performance considerably. Thus, they claim that fully networked companies show a higher return on investment, which shows an overall improvement on their financials and competitive position. In an effort to merge the different views on social media ROI that exist in literature, Gilfoil and Jobs (2012) created a “3D unit of analysis” framework which takes into account the complexity of social media, but with which the authors are also claiming that there are only a small number of circumstances in which social media efforts could be analyzed into financial ROI immediately. According to a more recent study by Gilfoil et al (2015), the focus has moved from measuring and reporting financial return on investment towards how much media spend should be reallocated to social media. In further detail, they claim that companies should not treat the return from social media independently of traditional media but rather see a possibility to improve their financial ROI through reallocating part of the money spent on traditional media towards social media.

Yet, despite the confusion which seems to be present in academia about the measurement of social media in financial returns, authors do find evidence that social media has an impact on the purchasing decision of consumers. Fisher (2009) claims that, according to a study by DEI Worldwide in 2008, “70 per cent of consumers have visited social media sites to get information” and “49 per cent of these consumers made a purchase decision based on the information they found through social media sites”. By giving an example of the apparel industry, Cao, Meister and Klante (2014) show that 56.3% of her respondents stated that social media was relevant to get inspiration for outfits or information about promotions taking place.

After having worked on the quantitative benchmark of social media myself during the business project, I came to realize that forcefully putting social media activity and engagement into numbers does not yield any expressive results or useful information. Much more, evaluating social media efforts in a qualitative way can be utilized in order to improve future campaigns and activities, as could be shown by organizing the posts we analyzed in our project into different categories. As was argued above, I agree that measuring social media in financial terms should not be a metric to decide whether or not to use online channels, as purposes tend to be increasing brand awareness or engagement with the brand, which does not only take time and effort to create but also to measure its impact.

c. Implications for theory and future research

The research done so far on the topic of return on investment in social media is not extensive as such. Many areas still need to be covered, e.g. as in the case of the NDC Ireland, it would be interesting to know whether social media influences the purchasing decisions of basic nutrients or daily food like dairy. Further implications for research include the question of whether ROI on the social media activities of category voices like the NDC Ireland are

possible and useful, and it what form these would be measured (e.g. increase in consumption of dairy in Ireland).

4. PERSONAL REFLECTION

a. Personal experience

i. i. Key strengths & weaknesses observable during the project

My personal reflection during the business project is based on three main learnings that I have had. Firstly, the business project had an impact on how my career choice shifted from being very much focused on Digital Marketing and Social Media. When starting the benchmark study, I recognized that the task was very analytical, rather than creative, as one would imagine. Even though I enjoyed organizing and re-organizing data in the beginning, it seemed more and more superficial to me towards the end of the project. Thus, I realized that even though I found Social Media or Digital Marketing quite interesting, the curiosity just persisted until a certain point, after which I started to scrutinize the whole purposefulness and deeper meaning of what I was actually doing. Secondly, I discovered the importance of strategically planning a project and allocating tasks in a thoughtful way. After our first meeting, we started to create a rough timeline for internal use. However, the timeline was about to be forgotten towards the end of the project, as we all got more and more stressed and aware of the deadline. Thus, a better and earlier allocation of tasks would have been very useful in our case. Thirdly, I rediscovered the importance of communication. More specifically, there were times where we felt that the expectations from the academic advisor on the one side and the corporate advisor on the other side were very different. Even though we were reassured that all expectations were aligned, we could have improved the situation by talking about this concern sooner to both advisors. Also, the communication in our group could have been improved by being more clear about what exactly every person was working on and how we could help each other sooner rather than later.

In terms of working style, I took the initiative in the beginning to be in charge of all communication with the corporate and academic advisors, in order to be in touch with what was happening and because I like to have responsibility in a project, which definitely added a lot of value to me. Regarding the report, I was responsible for the quantitative analysis and the recommendations resulting out of these. I felt that this added a lot of value to my analytical skills, which I had planned to improve beforehand. While working on my part, I remember thinking of the best way to organize the data gathered, then having a flash of insight, after which I reorganized it again. While having phases of getting frustrated and lost, I recognized that overall I enjoyed the task to some degree, to my surprise.

ii. ii. Plan to develop of your areas of improvement

Now that I am more aware of my skills, areas where there is room for improvement, my likes and dislikes in terms of tasks and my career choices, I plan to work on my analytical skills even more in the future. Furthermore, as I was the one always making it a point to keep harmony in the group, I think I should be able to be more assertive and strict when needed. As I was aware of this facet of my personality earlier, I started working on this in our class of “Global Leadership” by volunteering in group exercises and having conversations with the professor on how I can improve.

b. Benefit of hindsight: What added most value? What should have been done differently?

As mentioned in the previous section, I was the one in charge of all communication with our advisors. I think this added value to our work as I was reliable and proactive in this aspect. Furthermore, my wish to structure our work and allocate tasks as soon as possible had a positive impact on how we organized our work. Moreover, the fact that I was solely responsible for the third part of our report made me feel accountable for the results and also made me feel like an “expert” in this field. Thus, I was able to answer all the questions related


to our analysis during the presentation of the project. However, there are certainly some things which should have been done differently, as mentioned above: time management and communication are two big points. Also, even though my being solely responsible for the third part of the report certainly added value, it might have been useful to have more people discussing how to go ahead.

APPENDIX










Appendix 1 – Excel file used to analyze social media postings

FACEBOOK WORLDWIDE BENCHMARK									
File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was made on 25 April by Szymon Paterek									
12 (1 shared 25x)									
A	B	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
1									
2	BENCHMARK JANUARY								
3									
4									
5									
15	AUSTRALIA								
16	Nat orga	Dairy Australia http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/	31	95	3 (1 was shared 18x)	3 (1 was shared 22x)	2	3	Regular posts (1 per week). More re-shared posts than commented posts. One successful post (60 likes), educational video (student work) "portray a day in the life of a dairy farmer"
17	Other orga	Legendairy http://www.legendairy.com.au	3018	2315	21 (1 shared 105x, 1 shared 79x, 1 shared 211x, 1 shared 85x, 1 shared 281x)	24 (1 shared 38x, 1 shared 87x)	147	118	Very regular posts (every single 1 or 2 day). Successful posts related to: attractiveness of the dairy industry (43,000 people directly employed), inspirational quote of the dairy farmer life ("Life is like farming you always reap what you sow"), funny picture posted to wish a Happy Friday ("Whisper's word of wisdom - let it brie"), "What is a cow without a map, udderly lost", picture praising dairy farmers skills ("A dairy farmers has over 170 skills), personal photos of Fb page fans (cute picture of farmer's baby/cow and sunset) => Fostering fan interactions
18	"Cool" brand	Bulla Family Dairy http://www.bulla.com.au	219	1241	4 (average share of 15x for every post)	6 (1 shared 112x)	10	58	Regular posts (1 per week on average) => Strong interactions with fans and community manager + use of the VIDEO: most posts relate to video recipe (special one for Australian day) using Bulla products/ announcing coming dates of the Bulla ice-cream truck/ announcing sales on Bulla products => daily use of the products!
19	NEW ZEALAND								
20	Nat orga	DairyNZ	83	318	3 (1 shared 11x)	12 (1 shared 25x)	12	16	Frequent and regular posts (1 per day on average). Successful posts related to: News report on DairyNZ's campaign to work with schools to educate about farming ("Telling the dairy stories to teachers and their students. Educating all New Zealanders about farming.")

Appendix 2 – Social Media Audit – Category Voice Dairy – NDC USA

WHO COMPANY	WHERE CHANNEL/ ENVIRONMENT	WHAT CONTENT/ SENTIMENT	WHEN DATE/ FREQUENCY	WHY PURPOSE/ PERFORMANCE	BEST PERFORMING POSTS CATEGORY*
NDC USA 	Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informative: Photo with link: article Photo with link: recipe Informative: Link – external Link - Video 	Up to 1 post per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive to website Increase category awareness Drive category consumption 	Informative (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal: Link to article (3)
	Twitter	Same posts as Facebook	Up to 1 post per day	Same as Facebook	Informative (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal: Link to article (2) External: Link (1)
	Youtube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recipe 	Rare and irregular posts	Engagement/ Awareness	---



Appendix 3 – Table of High Performing Posts on Facebook – Dairy Brands

<div>  HIGH PERFORMING POSTS </div>		
Organization	Content	Example
ALPRO 	Top category: Photo with recipe in the comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos of Alpro cuisine • Interactive question • Recipe link in the comment 	
DAIRY QUEEN 	Top category: Photo of food, products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos of deals • Giveaways, Deals • free products: post several times 	
Bulla Family Dairy 	Top category: Video Type: New product <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorful • Mixed with dairy and candy • Childhood 	
Anchor  Fonterra 	Top category: Video <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • longer ones, telling interesting life stories, inspirational • informative – link to website: product to heal bones quicker 	
Gay Lea Foods 	Top category: Photo of food, products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post showing the farm • Riddle for users – close-up photo 	

Appendix 4- Recommendations - content strategy (organic)

Objective	Purpose	Category/Pillar	Content	Channels
Category Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote dairy products and show their variety Strengthen the Irish origin of products Showcase culinary possibilities 	Informative - internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with asking a rhetorical question Post link to an internal article, along with a photo Recipe: Photo with link Photo of nice looking dish, along with recipe or link Competitions/Quiz Daily featured product, its story and where it can be used Featured stories with Irish farmers 	Facebook
		Informative – internal and external	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post link to internal and also external articles, along with a photo Post nice looking photos of dairy dishes Event-related posts 	Twitter
		Photo (Food)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on nice-looking photos of dairy dishes Along with a link to recipe Daily featured product, its story and where it can be used 	Instagram
Health Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote milk and dairy as a healthy source of critical nutrients Appeal to anyone concerned about nutrition (e.g. parents) 	Informative – internal and external	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition facts / statistics of dairy products Showcases how milk and other dairy help kids to grow healthy 	Facebook, Twitter
B2B Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and safeguard the Irish dairy industry Leverage Science & Research to drive category growth 	Informative – internal and external	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job openings within the industry Featured news about Irish dairy companies Showcase latest research within category 	Twitter, LinkedIn

Appendix 5 – Recommendations - Facebook ads (paid)

Campaign Objectives	Post Boost	Promote Page
Ad Sets & Audience Targeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connections: People who like National Dairy Council of Ireland ■ Placements: News Feed on desktop computers, News Feed on mobile devices or Right column on desktop computers or Instagram Feed ■ Exclude: Interests: vegan, Veganism or Vegan Recipes ■ Schedule: one day a week, for example Wednesdays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Excluded Connections: Exclude people who like National Dairy Council of Ireland ■ Placements: News Feed on desktop computers, News Feed on mobile devices or Right column on desktop computers ■ Exclude: Interests: Veganism, Vegan Recipes or vegan ■ People Who Match: Interests: Food and drink, Cooking, Recipes, Dairy product or Baking, Milk
Budget	Suggested bid: 0.73€ per post engagement	Suggested bid: 0.66€ per page like
Creative Example		

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